# CHRIST'S CHALLENGE IN THIS WORLD CRISIS

GEORGE WILLIAM DOUGLAS

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# CHRIST'S CHALLENGE TO MAN'S SPIRIT IN THIS WORLD CRISIS

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# CHRIST'S CHALLENGE TO MAN'S SPIRIT IN THIS WORLD CRISIS

Advent Addresses at the Cathedral
of St. John the Divine, New York

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM DOUGLAS, D.D., S.T.D.

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# FOREWORD

THESE addresses were delivered in course at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, on the Sunday afternoons in Advent, 1917. Their general subject is the essential spirituality of human life, in contrast to the materialistic aspect which in these trying times our life has seemed to wear. Like many others, the preacher has heard above the tumult of world-war a distinct challenge of Jesus Christ our Lord to the spirit that is in man; and these addresses are a faithful endeavor to declare the message that has been thus vouchsafed.

Everybody is aware by now that this is a dangerous world, but it is more and more evident that the chief danger is not to men's bodies, but to their minds and souls. At the front plain soldiers have learned this where the appearances were most to the contrary. On the battle-field bodily harm is for the moment comparatively unimportant: what matters most is the spirit, and the body must be kept fit so as to secure presence of mind; and some have found their souls more liberated than ever, realizing that the point of death is a point of life. Meanwhile

those same old mysterious terms, the good and the bad, crop up and are applied even to the mechanism of war and the material implements. We cannot refrain from judging these according to the character of those that wield them, and their spiritual purpose.

Behind the lines this world crisis has had much the same result. The great surprise of life these past three years has been the spirituality of it, and the arousal of the human mind, even when it was being drilled to attain what looked like the goal of sheer materialism. Germany has borne tacit testimony to this by her system of universal espionage, her propaganda and intrigue. Here her aim was, not men's bodies, but their mentality, and to control or break their spirit.

As to presence of mind, the Prussians by years of preparation had stressed that for all and even more than it is worth. All Germany had been intellectually drilled. But here came another surprise. Many intelligent men had supposed that if you develop the intellect, man will thereby of himself alone outgrow what is brutal in him. But the devil was ready to tempt even intellectuals to be brutish still. So it has been proved on an enormous scale that the brute man can be intellectual up to a certain point. But at that point he has had an astonishing experience. He has found that brute force, even when backed by

brainpower and unlimited desire, is in the long run futile for the government of intellectual men that are not brutish, since these resent to the death such domination unless their spirit gives way. God knows that America has sins enough of her own, but hitherto she has not succumbed to the delusion that Might is Right. Nay at the very moment when, dismayed by Prussianism, thousands of mankind were asking whether Christianity is not a failure, the challenge of Jesus Christ made itself heard once more. His Name is probably on more men's lips now than ever before. And now, as ever, the authority of Christ Himself is superior to that of those who have called themselves Christians. Christ searches and divides the spirits of men, asking them, "*What* spirit are ye of?" He presents Himself in the Everlasting Now: the life to come begins here for those who will lay hold on it. To which decision Christ invites us, saying: "Follow Me, and ye shall not walk in darkness."

This, then, is our Day of Judgment; but it goes beyond our immediate trial. This war will not last forever; but afterward, on what appear to be more peaceful fields, the challenge of Jesus will still be ringing in our ears. So there our Christian warfare shall continue. The science of political and industrial management remains to be mastered, and the prophets of democracy fore-

see that the science of management does not lie with the managers alone. Labourer and manager must co-operate and sympathize, animated by Christ's Spirit, or else the devil will prod them to the same old tragedy of brutishness backed by brainpower and unlimited desire. It is not merely a technical but a human problem, and, as such, spiritual. Here again man, if he will lay hold on eternal life, can exchange nothing for his soul; and the intrepid spirit must choose whether to be independent *of* Christ or independent *with* Him. To have faith in democracy we must have faith in Christ, Who presents our God to us as the Servant of servants. Social service without Christ is cankered by Pride; but Christ, as Captain of our souls, is the transfiguration of Humility, and God as Love is all in all.

After my course was finished I received from the Dean of the Cathedral a most kind expression of his hope that my sermons might be published. A like request came from the circle of clergymen in New York and vicinity known as The Clericus. I have availed myself of the permission given me to print in an appendix these unexpected letters which induced me to let my little volume go out into the world.

George William Douglas.

Feast of the Epiphany,
January 6, 1918.

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In spite of appearances, man is still finding that this is a spiritual world. Even on the battle-field the body must be fit, not so much for its own as for the spirit's sake. Presence of mind and spirit decide the issue; and some find their spirits liberated as never before. And the old mysterious terms, the bad and the good, still apply even to war tools according to the purpose of those who wield them.

In Advent we celebrate the arrival of the most spiritual Person in the world. He met the worst that we encounter now; but throughout He was in touch with the Father of Spirits. Christ offers us His knowledge of the Father, and challenges our faith.

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Applied to Christ this term acquires a new meaning. So the world's idea of humility is changing where Christ is known. The age of Celsus contrasted with our age. But Christ's humility requires ever new applications, which we find difficult. As to the barbarian mind Christ seemed to humiliate God by service, so to the mind and imagination of the modern scientist Natural Law seemed to lock God out of His world. What this world crisis has taught both the scientific and the plain man. Human efficiency need not swagger: and God may hide Himself. It is an over-eager reading of the ways of Providence, to expect that the ultimate right Cause shall quickly win. The lesson of Bethlehem.

"He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat;
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on."

Julia Ward Howe
(The Battle Hymn ot the Republic).

# Christ's Challenge to Man

## I

## CHRIST'S CHALLENGE TO THE SPIRIT OF MAN

The days of the years of my pilgrimage.

—*Gen.* xlvii:9.

Thou shalt keep the feast of harvest.

—*Exodus* xxiii:15, 16.

Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

—*Isai.* ix:3.

Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you.

—*Gal.* x:11.

Hast Thou (O God) eyes of flesh, and seest Thou as man seeth? Are Thy years as man's days?

—*John* x:4, 5.

As the days of Noe, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. . . . Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore.

—*Matt.* xxiv:37, 40, 42.

Not to confuse you in the reading, I gave my texts without chapter and verse, so that the tone and consensus of God's Word might bear upon us in a total impression. Last Thursday we celebrated our national Harvest Home, and I do not suppose

that it ever fell at a more heartsearching time; though if ever a people had cause to be thankful for their harvest from the farms, our nation has it now.

But yonder in Europe there is a harvest of another kind, mixed in with the fruits of the field,—a ghastly harvest of human bodies, piled up like potatoes in the trenches; and it requires little imagination for our souls to see there the grim Harvester, with the sickle in one hand and the hourglass in the other. "Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." Yet, under God, even that awful harvest will in the end be helpful to mankind.

And here we sit in comparative plenty, having garnered our farm-goods. Comfortable, comfort-loving Americans, gathering in your corn, and wine and oil—yet anxious now in spite of them—ye observe days and months, and times, and years; but I am afraid of you. I am afraid lest the irony of Isaiah hits us hard: "Thou hast multiplied the nation and not increased the joy. They joy before Thee as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." For have we not reaped hitherto our full share of the spoils of war, though we be but on the fringes yet of its sufferings and sorrow? Ah me! there is another sort of harvest there, and soon it may be

here, for us to gather if we will—a harvest of lessons for man's immortal soul; and whether we be joyful in that, or not, depends on other operations than our gleanings of grain and oil and wine. And already we have seers, who see us through and through—Recording Angels. Saith one such in the Apocalypse: "I know thy works. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

Bear with me therefore, brothers, if in this Harvest Home a spirit in my feet brings me to that higher field, where a real spiritual warfare puts us now in danger of our everlasting lives. I am hearing today the searching question of Jesus Christ, put one harvest morning on the plenteous fields of Palestine to the Pharisees and Sadducees, when they asked of Him a sign from Heaven: "O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? . . . For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Someone has said that a Christian who is not full of joy and thanksgiving at Christ's feet, is not a true Christian. "Rejoice in the Lord alway. And again I say, Rejoice." But know thyself

first, or thy thanksgiving will be like the tinkling of a cymbal. Do you remember the passage in the Book Joshua, where Achan was found out in his sin, and found himself out? and as he stood there, taken, Joshua said to him, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God?" If our Harvest Home this year puts us where Achan was, and we know it as Achan did, then indeed may we rejoice with exceeding great joy.

We residents of this metropolis, be our homes hard or luxurious, are within easy reach of the best and the worst in human life. Even here some people make for themselves a narrow room, sordid and selfish, with short views; though it need not be so, for the men and women of this community, do what they will to shorten their views, have wide relations: many have personal experience of large affairs, and the education to appraise them at their value; and none of us can even walk the streets without being confronted with a cosmopolitan population. And just because the place is so large, the scene so varied, the population so diversified, within due limits of decency and convention the resident here is allowed to be himself, and to go his way, unnoticed in the crowd, though the whole wide range of the crowd's tastes and thinking is opened out before him. Intellectually and spiritually, no thoroughbred American in New York has either right or reason to be cramped at all.

His field is the world. Just because we have this privilege of intellectual and spiritual independence, here, if anywhere,—above all in this great Cathedral—is the spot to rise above the characteristic weakness of so many comfortable, comfort-loving Americans, to shirk the heights and depths of conduct and hard thinking,—to take as easily as possible their opportunities of life.

> For life's helm rocks to the windward and lee,
> And time is as wind, and as waves are we,
> And song is as foam that the sea-winds free,
> Though the thought at its heart is as deep as the sea.

A year ago this time hundreds of thousands of Americans were congratulating themselves that our President had "kept us out of the war." Now he has led us into it. Thank God for that! it is one great blessing of our Harvest Home. For this is a social world; if one member suffers, all do: if one nation or another is defending the cause of righteousness and justice against sheer materialism and Unlimited Desire, then every nation is in that war, and must take sides; and woe to those who imagine that by abstinence from downright conflict they are not taking one side or the other. Thank God we took our side!

> "Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
> In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side,
>
> * * * * * * *
>
> And that choice goes by forever twixt that darkness and that light!"

Someone has remarked that the men who are now under thirty-five did their preparatory thinking for life "in an age saturated by sentiment;" and you and I can now see that this sentiment was operating in one or the other of two directions: the *joie de vivre*, childlike delight in being alive and letting it go at that: the Gospel of Amusement, Bread and Sport; or again, a mawkish compassion for those whose lot is hard. But ours is a sterner time. Instead of being merely sick with pity for pain, we now see that pain is nature's warning of danger, and that we must be ready to live dangerously. Whoso shirks the danger, even in thought, and still more in action, is making himself like unto the beasts that perish. "Man will not abide in honour, seeing he may be compared unto the beasts that perish; this is the way of them. This is their foolishness. O consider this, ye that forget God." In the Providential development of life on earth, it appears that foreknowledge of suffering and death, the ability to take them to oneself and weigh them beforehand, is one of the distinctions between man and the mere animal. The animals exhibit little or no forethought of either pain or death, and but a transient recollection of them when seen in others. The animals are like the larks we read of now on the battlefields, singing as buoyantly as ever throughout the booming of cannons and the hurtling of shells—the bullet has

not hit the lark yet, so what does it care? But man, if he stops to recollect, by his experience of pain to himself, and of pain and death to others, is rendered a different being from the animals; so much so, that the vast majority of recollected men (bear me witness, brothers) would be immensely relieved to know that they and their dear ones would not have to suffer, and would not have to die. This awful war, at first sight composed so largely of brutishness and sheer mechanics, has raised, as never before so widely, this distinctly spiritual issue. All mankind are brooding over it. They are impatient of the former generation's Gospel of Amusement. When somebody proposed that our leading Baseball Teams should be war-exempt, it was a good sign that there was a general exclamation of disapproval and disgust. Nay more, this sense of the seriousness of life and duty has been roused in thousands of our young men and women who a short time ago were most bent on mere amusement. There is a new determination, a seriousness in their ardent eyes, a willingness to be found at prayer.

> Life is real, life is earnest,
> And the grave is not its goal.

Death certainly is a great adventure, but no whit greater than was our entry one by one into this life from our mother's womb: hardly greater than

the adventure whereby we pass from childhood into manhood, or from singleness to matrimony with its awful risks and happiness, or again from vigorous manhood to the stiller time of old age and decrepitude before the leap of death. It is all for each of us one great adventure, with danger ever present; and at each stage of it, we meet the same insistent challenge, Christ's challenge, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

To the astonishment of many of us, that challenge has come where we least expected it—at what appeared to be the most brutal and mechanical point in the world—the modern battlefield; and by thousands of Christian men it has been accepted there. This outcome of the struggle is thrillingly depicted by Raemaeker in his picture of King Albert of Belgium confronting the German Kaiser. With a sweep of his arm the Kaiser points to devastated Belgium, and exclaims, "See, Sir, you have lost your all." But King Albert answers, "No, Sir, we have not lost our soul." Thus materialism vanishes, and the whole of what is seen is recognised as an expression of the unseen. It is a triumph of the intrepid spirit. The same comes out when the medium is not artistic, but the ordinary expression of plain men. There has come to these battling men a new impression of detachment from mere material things, of spiritual freedom, of being in the world but not quite of the

world. Plain soldiers, as their letters show, cooped up in the trenches, have been learning what it is to feel unhampered by peril or held by the risk of death. There and then, of all moments in the world, it is borne in on these fighting men that all the revolting part of their business, which largely began in disregard of the value of the soul, is now proving more than ever the importance of the soul as an individual unit dealing with others of like kind. The whole issue turns on what the single souls care for and believe, and their body is as nothing in exchange for their soul—for presence of mind. Dear ones at home, distractive circumstances, unwonted scenes, fatigue, wounds, horrible sights of anguish,—nothing robs these men, or their surgeons and nurses, of their power of mental concentration, or renders them inattentive to the duty of the moment—their spiritual task. Neither do they count their life dear unto themselves. What matters is, what the man *is* from moment to moment. So the mind is done with fluster, and the spirit with fretting. A man takes his life in his hands: he deals with it simply and directly. The doors of the senses are guarded strictly for the task in hand. The man does not even notice when he is wounded; he gets used to being at the point of death, till it becomes to him none other than a point of life; for his one idea is, to "do the next thing"—that proper thing. Mean-

while there is floating in his mind a consciousness of the largeness of life, of the momentous and dignified connections between the small individual and the great beyond—the great Cause—so that no individual effort is unimportant. Not by me, not on my account, shall the Great Cause suffer.

> Act, act in the living present,
> Heart within, and God o'erhead!

For at least a generation following this war that will be one influence which thousands of the survivors shall bring back to their respective homes and nations. It is one part of the challenge of Jesus Christ accepted, and imparting to those who accept it a new quality of the inner life, a new ethical energy. Politics, business, literature, the Churches—all shall show the effects of it. So God the Heavenly Father brings good out of evil, and turns the fierceness of men to His praise. Thank God for that at our Harvest Home.

But the challenge of Jesus is not confined to those who receive it on the battlefield. It is coming also to us behind the lines. If some soldiers, in their carnage, learn thus to live the life of independent personal souls, why not we?

This is Advent Season, when we make ready to celebrate the coming of Jesus,—the most spiritual

Person that ever wore the form of man. And what those mortal men that I just spoke of—those battling brothers of ours fighting for our cause—have had as their experience of the real essential force of human life even in abnormal conditions—Christ at His Coming exhibited the same; and for thirty-two years before the final year His exhibition of it was in what we call the quiet ways of the normal life of man. For thirty years He lived what we call the "Quiet Life," mostly at Nazareth as a Carpenter; followed by two years of a more conspicuous ministry, more evidently arduous and fuller of opposition, until the painful end. Probably the proportions of the normal and abnormal life were about the same for Christ as for the rest of us before we go hence and are no more seen; for He tasted what it is for a man to live and die, and He was in all points tempted like as we are. In His life, as in ours, there was the normal and the abnormal, the exciting and the commonplace; and in both Christ acquitted Himself in precisely the same manner: as a truly spiritual Person, possessed of God and conscious of that fact. Evil spirits, "principalities and powers, mustering their unseen array," waited on Him as they do on us; but Christ was always on His guard: He exchanged nothing for His soul. We must follow His example. Many people are being prompted by this war to throw all

their spiritual helps,—what they call "their ideal agencies"—education, international law, fraternized commerce, even Christianity itself—to throw all these into the scrap heap. Christ would not have us use this crisis so. He would have us use it to magnify the human soul for time and for eternity. He would have us exchange nothing for our souls. And His challenge to us, in our comparatively normal life even in war-time, is precisely what He makes to our soldiers in the trenches. The first thing which they find there is the independence of soul that makes the difference between brute and man; and here in our more normal circumstances, we can find the same. But when we find that, the next question is, Are we then independent *with* Christ, or independent *of* Him? For either we can be; and the challenge of Christ goes even that far.

You and I, with our independent spirits, have got to pass our private judgment on the objective, historic fact of this war, not by itself, but coupled with another historic fact; and the fruit we gather from both together will be our Harvest Home. There is nothing that has happened in this war; nothing that ever led men to doubt the Fatherhood and strong Love of God, that did not befall Christ in His own time and Person. Round the Figure of Jesus of Nazareth, there closed in for exhibition what was as bad as the

worst that we see now. Everything that has ever moved men to doubt God's love and power; every pain of body and anguish of mind; every experience of sardonic and bestial malignity, so far as the essence of it goes; every taste of the cup of fickleness and ingratitude and selfishness, and of the shortsighted looseness of mind, that has turned some philanthropists into cynics and made some men go mad,—all this, even this, befell our Lord. Yet He maintained His conviction and asserted His personal knowledge that man is a spirit in touch with the Father of spirits; that God is Love, and in Him is no darkness at all; and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Christ disappeared for three short days in what we call death, and reappeared with the same serene joy of perfect Sonship: before and after death the same smile of the soul was in His eyes and on His lips. "Peace I leave with you. My Peace I give unto you." Brothers, will we garner that for our Harvest Home? Few thoughtful persons of good-will can look out on this world today and not perceive that it is no mere panorama of material mechanics—of stocks and stones and gesticulating bodies: that there is a spiritual issue in which we partake. But Christ's challenge goes deeper and higher. He would lift our spirits to confidence in God the Father; and in that sense Christ would be Captain of our souls.

Any person who awaits the outcome of this war, or of some interior crisis of his own soul, before he will settle in his mind and will whether Christianity is valid or not, is like the old doubter in Galilee, who demanded of Jesus another miracle before he would believe on Him. And to the modern men, even as to the Galilean, the patient Jesus is offering the same scrutinizing testimony, saying, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Father, Father."

"Speak to Him, then, for He hears, and Spirit with spirit can meet.
Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands or feet."

"Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Behold, I have told you before. Watch therefore."

"Turn Thou us, O good Lord, and so shall we be turned!"

# II

# WHAT SPOILS THE HUMAN SPIRIT: PRIDE

## KULTUR AS AN OBJECT-LESSON

> And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.
>
> —*I Sam.* xxviii:6.

Unless it be Judas Iscariot, there is hardly in the whole Bible a gloomier tragedy than this of Saul—that unhappy king, so splendid and attractive in his prosperity, so ruined at the last.* How the young men and maidens admired him as he stood a head taller than the applauding multitude, modest, manly, magnanimous, on the morning when Samuel anointed him! What meanest beggar would have changed places with him, when in disguise he skulked at midnight round the hill to the witch's cave? And when from that woman with a familiar spirit he got Samuel's message, as

* This opening passage of my sermon is a reminiscence of one of Canon Farrar's. Twenty-one years ago I acknowledged my indebtedness to him in a sermon I preached at St. John's Church, Washington; but I do not know which book of his I referred to, so I cannot now make my reference definite.

from the lips of a ghost—from Samuel who had been the friend of his youth and might have blessed his reign—there was a crash on the rocky floor, as Saul swooned and fell straightway his full length upon the earth. How did the sun, which had risen gloriously, go down while it was yet day! Next morning he lost the battle, and was sorely wounded by the archers, as the tide of Israel's carnage rolled towards him from Gilboa's heights. His people were defeated: his brave sons slain. What was life to him any longer? Since his faithful armour-bearer would not ease him of his life, he fell on his own sword. Then the foul Amalakite, plundering the slain, took the crown from the kingly forehead and the bracelet from the arm; and all that remained of the beauty of Israel was a grinning skull among Dagon's trophies, a suit of riven armour in the house of Ashtaroth, and a few bones bleaching in the sunlight on Bethshan's walls. Yet in all that tragedy this is the most tragic: that "when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets." Outward troubles may be borne. Threatened by shipwreck, we can breast the storm. Even such an unspeakable calamity as that at Halifax three days ago can be endured by our manhood and our constancy. All our experience, emphasized these past three years, has taught us that earthly hopes are utterly pre-

carious, and the most vigorous youth may be snapped short. But faithfulness feeds on suffering, and courage does not die. To be vanquished in battle, to be superseded in power, to see popularity crumble; to watch the rise of another while one's own work wanes; to experience even that sinking of the heart which is caused by failure after honourable effort—all this Saul had to bear, and all this can be borne. But to be in utter perplexity of soul; to stagger blindly to a spiritual precipice; to have one's prayers flung back to one and know they deserve no answer because God has not been really in one's prayers—that is anguish worse than death. If God be with us, we can grope in the darkness and find His Hand. Saul of Tarsus, the Apostle Paul, when he had nobody likeminded and in prison was condemned to death, could write the exultant letters that enhearten us to this day. But when Saul, the King of Israel, inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not. Ah! that is to be desolate.

What was the cause of it? Pride: spiritual pride. Brethren, we are dwelling, these Advent afternoons, on the essentially spiritual nature of human life, and how this has been brought home to people—young and old—in what one would have thought to be a most unlikely way: the way of war, where the brute and the machine appear at first to dominate and decide the issue. But in this history of

Saul, who was himself a man of war, we have exhibited, at the very centre of the spiritual life, what spoiled it—spoiled it in peace-time equally with war-time—Pride.

Time was when God was really in Saul's thoughts, and therefore kept him humble. Saul recognized himself to be God's representative—set by God and anointed by Samuel to be King over Israel. He often worshipped God, and spoke of Him, and welcomed His messengers and performed His behests faithfully, and fought God's enemies at all risks. Yet by and by it was all in vain, for Saul let his mind be changed. There were forewarnings. God sent prophets to him, such as Samuel, and sweet singers like the shepherd David, whose psalms were, as we know, the very voice of praise and prayer. But self, not God, was in the citadel of his soul. It was the devil's sin, and it had the devil's punishment. And it is written for our admonition in the inspired chronicle. Read it for yourselves, and ponder. Notice the subtle beginnings and the insidious degrees of it, and ponder them. Was there ever a better opportunity for us to take the lesson home than this, when a momentous year is drawing towards its close, and the birthday of the Christ-child is near, Whose cradle was the very shrine of humility? Thereafter take this verse of the Psalm we so often say, and put it this time directly to yourselves: "All my

fresh springs are in Thee." Possibly that was one of the sweet songs that David sang on his harp before Saul, in the days when there was yet hope for him. There is hope for us now; but are the springs of our being in God, or in ourselves? Is God our centre? Or are we self-centred? Let us not be disappointed of our hope.

Brethren, we should end this old year and begin the new with resolution—with good resolves, wise plans and earnest hopes. If in God we put unreservedly our trust, everything—our friends, home, Church, business—will have fresh zest for us; and not least our war-work. We shall be gentler, kindlier, braver, more vigorous, more buoyant; for God can lift us up forever! Yet even if it be that our spirit is not altogether spoiled; if we are not as yet quite self-centred; nevertheless there is an old Greek motto which still holds good, and which prepared men for Jesus Christ: "Know thyself." It is not the superficial thrill of worldly occupation, the dignity of being busy, the trappings of a lively community, the whirl of a great city; it is not even the gravity of a political crisis and the din of war that constitute the vital interest of men's conduct here. The vital interest lies where Christ put it: What shall a man, a Church, a nation, give in exchange for the soul? And when we are tempted to make such exchange, it is self-knowledge that helps to bar the way, convincing

us that God alone is our shield and our exceeding great reward. At that crisis to be self-deceived is awful; and spiritual pride comes before that fall. Oh, to be simply desirous, at the heart of all, to do God's will! How rare that is. And because it is so rare, true happiness, true power, are also rare.

There has been in our time a stupendous exhibition of spiritual pride, individual and national. Mankind never saw it bulk so large. And mankind are passing judgment on it: we must: no other course was left to us: we were pushed to the wall and compelled to express our opinion, and to act accordingly in open war. As the Personality and character of Jesus Christ have grown into the consciousness of modern men, over against that another character—a horribly distorted human nature—has loomed larger and larger. Our former Minister to Holland, Dr. Henry Van Dyke,* who lived very near to this distorted embodiment of human nature possessed by an evil spirit, was speaking the other evening at the annual dinner of Union College alumni. This was his terse, grave summary of what he saw face to face. "The German people are waging this war on three false assumptions: first, that God chose Germany to

* Reported in the New York *Times*, December 14, 1917.

dominate the world; second, that He chose the House of Hohenzollern to dominate the German people; and third, that the way to attain domination is by force." The New Testament foresaw it and called it Anti-Christ; and at last it has shown itself as evidently that,—to the amazement of mankind. Just now it styles itself by that good old title, Kultur; and it has not hesitated to claim that Christ was mistaken: that probably there is a God, but Christ's presentation of Him was misleading. As we look back a little it seems strange to us—now that the mask is dropped from this character—that for more than a generation most of us were fascinated by this so-called Kultur. We thought its ways so good, so useful to the world—the very thing we needed. To use the parlance of the street, when Kultur had a chance it really seemed "to get there": to touch the goal of efficiency—of the exploitation of the earth and of human faculty, which is the ideal of political economy. It really appeared to have the saving spirit, and reminded us of Christ's Sermon on the Mount: "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." We little guessed how much would soon be lost by it, even of material things, not to mention souls! for it had made us ashamed of our unregulated, discursive, individualistic methods—at any rate as we applied them. But the mask has fallen; nor is this the first time that Satan clothed

himself as an angel of light, deceiving, if it were possible, the very elect. For

> Oh, the little less, and how much it is!
> And the little more, and what worlds away!

Even if the methods were all good,—which they are not,—we see now that they are poisoned at their spiritual source, so that their superficial efficiency but renders them more deadly. With the domineering spirit in control, rather than the guiding, persuasive spirit of Jesus, the final fruits of Kultur are not conservative but destructive; and lo! physical, intellectual, spiritual destruction are all around us now, along with an open, cynical disregard of high spiritual ideals. If man or nation will not consent to let their soul be dragooned and commandeered, "down with it, down with it, even to the ground." Do it, or die. Might is Right, and be it so. This hard spirit, this time-spirit of world-domination is what Christ withstood in His temptation: "Get thee behind Me, Satan." Now, become aggressive, Satan has pushed us Christians to the wall. We had no option but to fight him, as one fights a maniac. It is war to the death, not for world-power, but for freedom to be children of God and disciples of Jesus. It is war to the death; and after death the judgment. Aye, the Judgment Day. You cannot, God does not, judge mere stocks and stones

and guns and gesticulating bodies. God judges the spirits of the fighting men; and now, if ever, we are wrestling with evil spirits for the cause of God and Christ. Our mistakes, our sins, are many. They weaken our ability to serve the great Cause. Many of us may well inquire whether, in past days, there has not been in ourselves also something of the temper of Anti-Christ. But poor soldiers of the true Christ though we be, our merciful Heavenly Father has made the issue plain, and shown us what to do. Therefore we commend our bodies and our spirits unto Him. "Behold I saw all souls, small and great, standing before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life." Our Lord Jesus, in His own recorded words, described our situation exactly: "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to the man by whom the offence cometh!" This offence cometh from Kultur.

God's way now is to give us an object-lesson; and He gives it from outside the United States of America because here, thank God, our political life does not favour the conditions that would supply the materials for this particular lesson. Let me illustrate from an instance where our conditions do supply us with an awful object lesson of another kind. I mean our national problem

of intemperance.* Time was when even in America the upper classes were as intemperate with liquor as the lower classes. Now that is not so. Hence if you go to a Sunday School of the upper classes and describe a drunkard to them, they are apt to laugh; whereas in a school of children from the slums there would hardly be a smile on any face. And the reason is that your children have not seen you drunk: they only think of it as a funny experience that in the streets they sometimes see; but the slum children in their tenement houses—often in their own homes—know what the curse of intemperance is, and they therefore do not smile. Somewhat so we Americans have had no near and unavoidable object-lesson of what it is to live under a tyrant, or an autocracy which acts as if Might were Right, and whose mind is set on dominating the world. But now God is giving us Americans an object-lesson in this from across the seas, and as it is brought home to us we smile no longer at Kultur.

Yet there is a danger that arises, not so much outside of us as in the citadel of our own souls, and the nature of it is the same as that whereby Saul fell. It makes me tremble when I hear

* See Dr. Leighton Parks's sermon on Service, p. 23. His sermon was published after my sermon was preached, but before it went to press; so that I am able to borrow, and gratefully to insert here, Dr. Parks's timely illustration for my own theme.

and read the expressions of self-satisfaction and self-confidence, when mention is made of what America is doing and has done. There is too much bumptiousness, as if we Americans "know it all": too much reference to the grand, decisive part that America is going to play in "making the world safe for Democracy." How about making Democracy safe for the world? Neither Democracy nor America are going to be decisive in this war unless they have a humble mind, and think soberly of themselves. Under God, America is called to a great part in this world-transaction; but "know thyself" first, and never dream that thou canst be without God in the world. And don't dwell on what America shall get out of it. Let your mind rather dwell on what God, the great and pure, shall get; though even so we are going into this war to get something for ourselves and for the world. We are going to get freedom. Would that our Pacifists could see that what we are fighting for is a vital part of them and of all of us—as much a part of us Americans as our mother and our home: freedom for our spirit, mind and body. But true freedom implies humility.* As Secretary Lane said, in his Report published in last evening's newspapers, "Our status in this war gives us a place of moral ascendency, from which,

* Cp. the phrase of our P. B. Collect: "Whose service is perfect freedom."

*if we be great enough to be humble,* we can be real masters of men, conquerors of the invisible kingdom of man's mind." But for that, brothers, we must first acknowledge the mastery of God, and bow, not our knees merely, but our inmost souls to Him.

I have just mentioned Purity; and I did so vaguely, generally, as one must. But you know what I refer to. Nothing so bars the soul to God as impurity; for did not Christ say, in one of His Beatitudes, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"?

Have you read the measured, grave, veiled words in which Bishop Lawrence, of Massachusetts, referred last week to the canker of vice that is threatening to eat up the physical vitality and the spiritual worth of our young soldiers, even here in the camps near home, and still more yonder at the European front? Perhaps you and I cannot do much about that directly. That rests in other hands. But O fathers, mothers, sisters, friends—we who stay behind—how about our own home-life and our social life? How about the thoughtless innuendoes of our gossip, the reckless stories, the questionable dress, the double lives we know of? And how our young folks are allowed by their parents to touch the verge of impropriety! Can

our home-life and our society pass unscathed when Christ utters His indictment: "Whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart?" Beware of "the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines." And O brave young men, who are risking, sacrificing your lives for us, for God's sake don't sacrifice your purity! Go into the war to get and keep your purity. For some of you that may be the hardest fight of all.

I will not go on. When one speaks of the citadel of the soul, no other human being can presume to enter, or expose what he suspects. In that inmost court it is enough for each of us to try to take heed unto himself; but there are other courts where we gather together, and where we share a common responsibility. Let us endeavour, this Advent, "in all our ways to remember God, and He shall direct our paths." Let us resist in ourselves the beginnings of evil, and not be self-deceived and blasted by spiritual pride. For in that case, even if we inquire of the Lord, He will not answer. When we assemble this coming Christmas at the Christchild's cradle, and like the Wise Men kneel down there, pray God for our nation, for our youth, for each of us, that in this day when, as never before, we have the opportunity of spiritual power, it may not be spoiled, but may be clothed and crowned with humility.

## III

## LAYING HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE

O man of God . . . lay hold on eternal life.
—*I Timothy* vi:11, 12.

On previous Sunday afternoons we dwelt on the noticeable fact that to many serious men, and to some who were not serious before, the essentially spiritual nature of our present life has been emphasised in the last three years. Whatever *men* may be searching for, the great, just God is searching and discerning the spirits of mankind; and very many have recognised that we are being searched by Him. That is one sign of our times. It is more and more perceived that in this awful time the community that will be defeated, if there be defeat, will be the town of Bunyan's allegory—the town of Mansoul.

"One watchword through our armies,
One answer from our lands—
No dealings with Diabolus
So long as Mansoul stands." *

So much for the life that now is. But how about the next life? What do we know of that? This

* The Holy War. Poem by Rudyard Kipling, in Christmas number of *Land and Water*.

question also is being asked, and it is in natural sequence to the other. If we can no longer separate the everlasting life of spirits from the brief, elusive, brittle fragment of it that is spent in the form of flesh: if "temporal" and "eternal" are no such antithesis as we used to make of them: if it is as spirits that we live here, and as spirits that we pass beyond: if in these gruesome days the consciousness of eternity is really entering a little into our daily habits of thought and feeling, while sanguinary death is taking so many that we care for into that near, next world: if the vast majority of our human race of spirits are already yonder, and just now our youth are to be gathered thither in millions, while it is mostly we older ones that linger here a little longer—then it hardly seems rational to suppose that, if there be a God, and if He, as Christ declared and died to show us, is the Heavenly Father Who careth for His own, there and here—it hardly seems rational that He would leave us in ignorance of the links of daily practice that unite our life to theirs. What, then, do we know of the life we have to live here that ties and identifies it with the life they have to live there? That is the question which thousands are asking, some here and in this Cathedral; some on the battlefields. Are we not told that the Tommies never say that their comrade has *died?* He has "passed on." They will not admit that there is a break

in the life-tie that binds them. One long, unbroken line of them is simply "passing on."

In his letter to Timothy, which supplied my text, Paul was evidently brooding over the same question; and he has much to say about it. An old man, under suspicion from the powers that be, he knows that he has but a precarious hold on the present life. So to his favourite disciple he speaks of the next world, to which he feels so near. His language is solemn, but no more so than when he spoke of usual matters; and what he says is without a trace of that fear of the unknown which, in any connection, troubles most men. Not only is there no fear in Paul's language, but there is the ring of confidence and joy. Paul's mind is neither cowed nor clouded by the mystery of the next world, by his ignorance of its conditions. On the contrary he is sure that he knows a great deal about it; so much so, that he even urges Timothy, who has the zest of the present strong in him—as it ought to be—Paul urges this young man to lay hold now on that eternal life, as if what is after death were even now within Timothy's reach and ken. What does Paul mean?

I can hardly lead up better to the answer than by an illustration lately afforded to those who stop and think. Four years ago, in the Master's Court of the Charterhouse, London, the Elizabethan Stage Society produced a play of great

interest. The same play was produced in New York three years ago, just before the war came, and under our very eyes transferred the drama from the stage to the battlefield. At that point the actors became soldiers; but for those who have spiritual eyes the substance of the action was hardly different at all.

In those Elizabethan days the people were fond of allegory. They liked to have the influences that press on human life so personified on the stage as to search the spectator's soul and purge him for a while. So the playwrights called their acted allegories "Moralities." The Morality chosen for the antiquarian revival that I refer to was entitled "Everyman"; and as he watched the progress of the piece, carefully set forth with the old-time furniture, the modern spectator was transported into the mediæval mood.

Two platforms stood in an open court, backed by windows, in the Perpendicular style, of the great hall of the Charterhouse. To the left was a small stage, with simple scenery—a large chair in the middle, two doors at the back, a spinning-wheel on the left, and two candles on the right; and behind the spinning-wheel and candles were curtains. At the back of the stage was an upper stage, to represent Heaven. The other platform, on the right of the audience, was a heptagonal structure, painted for stonework, and approached

by steps. The two sides away from the audience were continued up for the background with imitation windows. Above was a canopy, blue and starred. The floor was open in the middle like a grave.

The Play, "Everyman," began with a prologue, spoken by a solemn messenger. He then retired, and the action began with the appearance of God, majestic, with a golden crown, on the upper stage. With uplifted hands He spoke of the careless life of men, and called on Death, His "Mighty Messenger," to summon *Everyman* to bring without delay his reckoning and account. Then God withdrew. Death, on the lower stage, would have been grotesque but for the effect of his terrible, unchanging voice, which brought out the beauty of his words. *Everyman* entered, gaily clad in early fifteenth-century costume, and singing a light song. Death held a dialogue with him, and finally struck him with a dart, refusing all the bribes that *Everyman* offered him, and leaving the wounded man to himself. In terror at the long journey through the Valley of the Shadow, *Everyman* seeks a companion among his acquaintances. First he calls on *Fellowship*, another gay character, profuse in promises beforehand, but quickly drawing back when he hears whither *Everyman* would lead him. Then in succession other friends are tried, but all excuse themselves. Finally he betakes himself

to two friends hitherto neglected, *Good Deeds* and *Knowledge*. They stand by him, but insist they cannot help him now unless he will first go to *Confession*, an old priest; though in referring *Everyman* to this good priest they are careful to add a sharp censure on evil priests. *Everyman* goes to the good priest, makes his confession, and, after doing penance, he covers his gay worldly dress with the sober brown garment of Contrition. Then, when he has made his testament giving half his goods in charity, he receives the Sacrament, and, clad in white and bearing a cross, he returns with slow, weak steps to the grave on the other platform. All the other characters desert him, and *Knowledge* and *Good Deeds* alone are left, while *Everyman* sinks into the grave with a final cry to God. Hidden angels sing joyfully over the parting soul, and the *Doctor* appears to point the moral in an epilogue.

Now here, in the crude mediæval imagery, we have the same view of the situation to which St. Paul gives a more intellectual touch, but to like spiritual effect. That mediæval playwright, and the spectators of his "Morality," are as confident as Paul was about the life after death, and they are confident in the same way; for both have accepted the message of Jesus Christ. They do not pretend to be able to describe the physical aspect of the world beyond the grave. They do not dis-

guise the natural tremor of him who passes thither, though in their own demeanor there is more of awe for themselves than of fear for him. They do not blink the fact that it is unnatural for him or them to hurry forward the hour of the transition. Nevertheless they are convinced, as Paul was, that the essential nature of the life after death is so identical with the nature of our life before death that, if we will, we can live here on the same plan, so that we and those beyond shall be in the same unbroken line of life everlasting. *Knowledge* and *Good Deeds* are not afraid to pass over with *Everyman* at death.

One might pause here to notice how this conviction of both Paul and the mediæval playwright agrees with what modern science has taught us—Darwin's law of Development: that nature usually moves, not by fits and starts, but by a steady process, one step leading to another; one condition of things containing within itself the germ of what shall follow. If, then, there be a future life, we must, as Paul says, be able to lay hold of it here. But what I wish to emphasise this afternoon is, that Jesus Christ anticipated this modern science. Christ not only established the fact of survival after death,—His own and ours—but He disclosed the supplementary fact of the continuity of character: that there is no such absolute unlikeness, as men supposed, between

the good life here and the good life there. Though we cannot now *imagine the scenery* of the life beyond the grave—eye hath not seen it, no brush can draw the picture: we have no organs here for such perception of it—nevertheless we have other organs that perceive it even now; we can understand and practice the manners that prevail beyond the grave: we have seen, we can imitate the sort of conduct here on earth which is the conduct there of those with whom all is well. Christ's human Life is a revelation of eternal Life. That is why He insisted that His disciples should establish His identity after His resurrection. "Handle Me, and see that it is I Myself"—the very same you knew before I died. And, as He constantly insisted, He was not in this appeal emphasising the body for the body's sake, but for the life's sake, for character's sake, which is the spirit of the body. "In Him was Life, and the Life is the Light of men." "This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." "We have seen it," says St. John. "Our hands have handled it, and we bear witness and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." In other words, as the mediæval playwright put it, *Everyman* has *Knowledge* of Jesus, and by *Good Deeds* can make Christ his friend, Who will not desert him when Death calls him to the life that is to be. The blood

of Christ is the very life of Christ, and that saves *Everyman*. *Everyman* is saved if he uses his knowledge and chooses the right life rather than the wrong; for the great gulf between right and wrong is both here and there.

Now one charge against our religion has been, that Christians neglect this present life for the dreamy, dreary hopes of another life to come; and unquestionably the weak hold of our religion on men's minds and wills has been largely due to the artificiality of many of our forms for it. St. Paul himself says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." But there is nothing artificial when, following his Master Jesus, Paul enjoins: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely, and of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. And the peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Brethren, be followers of me, as I also am of Christ. This is eternal life, to know Jesus Christ. O man of God, lay hold on eternal life," i.e., grasp it now.

So the Christian lives and labours in this temporal scene, facing his certain grave as he faces the other adventures that belong to the mystery of our being, and are lived through—birth, childhood, manhood, marriage, and whatsoever career we

choose: for the element of adventure is in them all. This present world has been made interesting, absorbing, delightful as well as sorrowful and difficult, by the Creator's deliberate intention; and there is nothing foreign to God in it, except sin. It was meant to afford a fair field for our powers, our tastes, our ambitions. "All things," the Bible says, "are given us richly to enjoy." It is a very engrossing affair, and was intended to be so. It is part and parcel of our religion to work here "while it is called today, before the night cometh." It is the prudent and natural exercise of our God-given faculties to spend them on the objects which are now before us, since the objects which the next life shall present are not before us now. For the present, if we be practical, we must expend our powers as the Bible commands and commends: in replenishing the earth and subduing it. "In your patience ye shall win your souls," was one of Christ's last words—in building our earthly homes, and securing our finances, and educating our children, and cultivating our social gifts, and doing our best for the City and the State, and for the inter-States which mankind's progress across sea and land is more and more welding into one vast, puzzling problem for society at large. The whole earth—rivers and ocean and soil and sky—was meant to be made by our genius to contribute to our longevity. Why not? since, properly speaking,

we need not be lingering at all, but living here substantially as by and by we shall be living beyond these voices. In the entire whole of life, if we be followers of Christ, the very qualities that serve us best here will serve us hereafter; for by these we shall be acquiring good character, which is like gold: it is good anywhere; it circulates everywhere—here and beyond the grave. The ancient Egyptians, when they banqueted, set a corpse among the guests for a memorial of human vanity; but the true Christian is mindful of the inevitable grave, not to render his enjoyments gloomy and taciturn nor to paralyse his energy, but to test what it is worth while to be ambitious about—right character: Knowledge and Good Deeds. On the road to Emmaus Christ, even after His resurrection, looks back and mentions His death without a qualm. It does not trouble Him to recall either the suffering that preceded it or the crisis itself. His life transcends them.

So for us it is simply a question of what we put faith in for the Everlasting Now. "Now is the day of salvation." If you choose, you can put faith in the type of character that is contrary to Christ; as if injustice and impurity and dishonesty and selfishness were the way of life—the way to succeed. Many do so, making these things the object of their faith; and, as Christ says, "Verily, they have their reward." But for now two

thousand years Jesus is before mankind as the right Object of faith, if what we want is Everlasting Life. "Jesus said unto His disciples, Will ye also go away? Peter saith unto Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." It is not, as some say: "If you do so and so, *you will get there*." It is that, if you live right, you *are* there. For persons of good will, death is simply another instance of passing on from plane to plane, from sphere to sphere, of continuous being, with God in Whom we have our being. It rests with you and me, as it did with Peter, to make that act of personal faith; for "he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." "This is the anchor of the soul which entereth within the vail, whither our Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

Every phase of actual life involves an act of faith. As the baby at the breast begins by an act of faith in his mother, whose life he draws in order to live at all, so the Christian thrives spiritually by faith in Jesus and His Life. But faith brings experience also. The baby gets life at the mother's breast; and he who takes Christ's life little by little feels and knows that he is in the Way of Life, which is purity, truth, justice, mercy and charity. As Christ said to the Woman of Samaria: "Whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him,

the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

So whenever a good deed is done, or a true word spoken, by you or to you, say to yourself inwardly, "Thus it shall be for ever and ever. To me to live is Christ. Lift me up forever!"

Men and brethren, was there ever a period in human history when death was so evident as now and caused so little surprise? We see the sword suspended over all the world, and hanging by a single hair. *Everyman* is no longer an actor on a stage for us, since all of us are he. Does it not behoove us, then, to do in actual life what he did on the stage? All the world's the stage, and all men and women are the players. But let us not *magnify the Hearse*, for that is but a signal of the Eternal Now. Lay hold on this, O man of God, with confidence and joy.

# IV

# THE TRANSFIGURATION OF HUMILITY

> And they found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger . . . She laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.
>
> —*S. Luke* ii:16, 7.
>
> He humbled Himself.
>
> —*Philippians* ii:5.

Not very long ago the Governor of Arizona, just to see what it feels like to be in jail, voluntarily spent a day in cell number 24 of the State's Prison, to which he is often obliged to condemn his fellowmen. Not a single newspaper spoke of it as a humiliating act. No one here present would so regard it. But at the outset even of our Christian era that act of the Governor of Arizona would have been considered humiliating. What has wrought this change in human opinion? The birth, the life, the death of Jesus, realised in human history. And the way men's change of mind about it began is recorded by St. Paul. He summed up his impression of Christ's whole transaction in a single phrase, where sorrow turns to joy—a phrase so terse that it lingers even in our forgetful memories.

"*He* humbled Himself." Once it has been applied to the Son of God, that phrase acquires a

new meaning and a different tone; and because we do apply it so, the world's idea of humility is slowly changing wherever Christ is known.

To gauge this moral and intellectual change in us, notice that the idea of humble service by one person of another has so penetrated our social system that if any person now undertakes to rule us by Divine Right without first proving that he can and will serve us, we instinctively resist his claims; and when Democracy claims Divine Right, we Christian democrats submit it to the same test. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ; for the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many"—this is no longer a maxim of the New Testament alone: it is a principle of our best civilization. We deem it savagery to be otherwise minded. But put your mind back eighteen hundred years, and hear the scoff of Celsus, the leading earnest sceptic of the first Christian era. Celsus was a good man, a religious man acording to his lights; yet this is his impression of Jesus: "So this is your God, and he who came to save the world is the son of a carpenter!" To a pagan in the time of the Cæsars, it was incredible that the world's master, no matter how good, should enter it in any such guise. Whereas if you walk the streets of New York to-day, and gather about you the people whether rich or poor, it is no

stumbling-block to their faith that Christ took the form of a servant, nor even that He died upon a Cross. The high, ethical force—not alone the beauty but the force—of human Love, stopping at nothing that will help the object of affection, is so plain that when God comes down for like purpose it does not, in our eyes, degrade Him. Not that we do not require, as the Pagans did, that our God shall show Himself to be powerful. Nay, we still must have Him so—the Almighty, Who is a most strong Tower. Rather it is that we have deepened our conception of what the highest power is. Brute force is to us no longer a sacred manifestation: it is little better than mechanical—but one step higher than machinery and engines, on the way from matter to true man; whereas the ability to be self-controlled and self-devoted, to curb unlimited desire and arbitrate antagonisms, is to us a sign that a low form of force is being refined, transformed by the higher intellect and the nobler spirit and thereby made stronger than before.

Notice that it had been by some supposed that if you develop the intellect, man will thereby of himself alone outgrow all that is brutal. But the devil was on his guard. He was ready to tempt even intellectuals to be brutish still. Now, however, that the intellectual aggressor has had, by a world-war, this colossal demonstration that brute force is in the long run futile for the government of

intellectual men, since educated men resent such force; so soon as the physically weaker are organized to protect themselves against reckless antagonism,—so soon as brutish intellectuals are at a deadlock with intellectuals that are not brutish, and the force of spirit has a chance to hold the sceptre over all—perhaps God's time is at hand for the overbearing men to regain their mental balance, and see that Christ was right: that the most compelling force of all—not destructive of either compeller or compelled—is intelligent Love, that "stoops to conquer." As our beautiful 110th Psalm, of this morning's service expressed it, "He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up his head."

But there are other applications of Christ's humility in coming to us, which we still find hard to accept, though these also are in process of acceptance.

One of these is in the field where the human mind has reached the conception of natural law. Of course law implies a lawgiver, and the lawgiver, if present, need not be necessarily inflexible. But the barbarian mind originally did not know that there are laws of nature, and so they were not thought of as hindrances in God's way. However when physical science had disclosed the idea of natural law and made it vivid, then to many who were religiously disposed natural law seemed

to be a hindrance to the effective presence here of the great Strong God, to Whom men used to pray, on Whom they used to lean. God seemed to be locked out of His Kingdom in this world, however it be in the world to come. As this afternoon's Lesson from Isaiah put it, "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens: that Thou wouldest come down; that the mountains might flow down at Thy Presence!"—that was the disposition of many educated minds that were religiously disposed. The ancients had thought it natural for God to swagger around the universe; and though educated moderns did not expect God to swagger and be blatant, that He should endure the burden of a physical Cross was to them unintelligible. Though they could see the beauty and the moral force of endurance on man's part, and even on God's part in the moral sphere, they could not bear that God should not evidently display His power over the physical mechanism of this world: they could not think of Him as serving us even according to His own laws. God must be like the average of human beings, who, even if they are educated, when they have effective power want it to be conspicuous. So, if there be a God Who is effective here, He must "rend the heavens and come down."

This difficulty of scientific minds was slowly disappearing even before this world-wide war broke out. For after all, it was largely a difficulty

of the scientific *imagination*. Men could not imagine *how* an Almighty God could hide Himself in His own laws, and still be our Saviour. But more and more the scientist found many other mysterious matters, which he has proved to be facts though he cannot imagine how: and meanwhile the spiritual side of the scientist's imagination waxed stronger than it had been; for natural science became less materialistic in its own premises. To such men as Kelvin and Wallace and Barrett and Pasteur and Oliver Lodge, and to philosophers like Bergson and others, their own scientific terms and postulates are involved with soul-power. Even practical skill is recognised to be inwrought with such power, without which no machine will operate; and even machines when used are found not to have restricted, but to have enlarged the scope and reach of the spirit that is in man. By practical skill a man takes over the machine that science gives him, and makes it an extension of his own body, so that the machine, like and with his body, works to spiritual ends; and these ends must still be judged by those same old awful, spiritual tests—the bad and the good. Man's fingers manipulate the machine, but there is soul-power in his fingers that qualifies both the fingers and the machine. George Herbert's poem,

"Who sweeps a room as for God's laws
Makes that and the action fine,"

can be translated into the whole colossal field of modern physics and mechanics. A doctor in his laboratory and clinic; an architect rebuilding San Francisco with stone and steel after an earthquake, or Halifax after an explosion, is manifesting an energy of soul that brings life and love and happiness into the realm of what looked like fatality. And as his heart and mind glow with that consciousness, he is not far from the satisfaction of knowing that "the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," Who worketh in us whether to will or to do.

Many highly educated men had got that far when the war came. Just before the war a speaker in London said: "Ever since I was a boy I had the feeling that the spiritual world is so real, so near me, that I could almost put my fist into it." But since this war began, he and thousands of noble men, plain men, are sure that they are putting their fists into a spiritual world—wrestling, as St. Paul says, not with flesh and blood, but with evil spirits, while good spirits are on their side. And behind the battle line, in scientific laboratories helping on the Cause, the imagination of the hard-working scientist has not found itself cramped by the idea of natural law. For now he sees that the good or evil of his scientific instruments is not determined by them as mere machines; and that they work both ways, good and bad. In some

men's hands, because of their mentality, these machines are devoted to brutal destruction; while in other hands the same implements are safe-guarding the most precious, the most spiritual powers of the human race; and the cross of Christ —a Red Cross now—can move in benediction on any field. This experience was expressed for us Americans, not by a professional parson in the usual Church, but by our President from the White House, when in his last address Mr. Wilson focussed all the natural laws and the mechanical apparatus, and in the hearing of mankind gave this profoundly spiritual account of what we and our Allies are engaged in. He said: "This intolerable thing of which the masters of Germany have shown us the ugly face, this menace of combined intrigue and force which we now see as the German power, a thing without conscience or honour or covenanted peace." On hearing that, which of us had difficulty in imagining that this is a spiritual world? and that as God in Christ long ago came down into this world, even if there was no room for Him in Bethlehem's inn, so again He is coming now into this frightful scene, where there seems to be small room for Him?

Thus not alone the plain man, but the man of science tempted on a narrower field to suppose that God's force, if genuine, must be immediate in order to be effective, is having on the wider field

of war an immense object-lesson, and that in the very direction whence part of his trouble came. It had been the delegation of Divine Power, the scattering of it, the committal of it to second and third and a thousand hands, until the hall-mark of Divinity seemed to be lost in the human crowd, and in natural laws and physical devices—it was largely this that made it hard for the scientific imagination to see how there can be really a Divine government of this multifarious world. But on the enormous scale of this world-war we are having an impressive illustration of how, in spite of appearances, a truly governing influence and stress can be effected even by a central mind and will that are only human; so that our spiritual imagination finds it easier to apply to God's government what we see in man's. By sheer stress of circumstances the man of science has had to leave his sequestered laboratory, where in quietness he felt his personal power, as if things were in his conscious grip. He has had to go out and commit himself to others, less scientific and far less inventive than he. Yet though science, now more than ever, is confessedly a large part of warfare; and though the field of what must be done scientifically in warfare is vast almost beyond conception; and though the central scientist is lost to view in the crowd—hidden away in a complicated chain of secondary causes and secondary persons—

nevertheless the influence and control of that central scientific man are so effective that in the result he feels himself. Edison, Wright, Marconi; the inventors of the submarine and of the stabilizer for the flying machine; the English Colonel Swinton who conceived the tank—who shall say that these men are not effective in this stupendous undertaking and felt throughout the world? Yet they are almost as invisible and unperceived by the hundreds of thousands who operate for them, as God is invisible in His universe to the creatures of His hand. The man of science knows how men generally *look to him* to win this war, and he is answering their prayers. What a physical, mental, spiritual presence he has in and among us! how executive after all he is! He is about our path and about our bed, "making the world safe for Democracy." And lo! not one of us thinks that his self-effacement is the least humiliating: we exalt him highly, and give him a great name. And if the scientists have crosses to bear, as they all have; if they must weep over the inadequacy and obstinacy of small men, and the egotism even of otherwise capable and faithful men; if they must be shocked to see their implements misused by bad men; is not all this of a piece with the revealed experience of the Divine Being Who has borne our infirmities, and by Whose stripes we are healed? Even the Old Testament prophet

said of the Heavenly Father, "Doubtless Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel the Saviour"; and when Christ was here He used to speak in lovely words about the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, and such like peaceful samples of God's presence and efficiency. Now the illustrations that come to us seem grim and forbidding. Yet the lessons from the field of war were also foreshadowed by the winged, searching words in which, on other occasions than peaceful Galilee, our Lord expressed Himself to men.

Furthermore, as human society develops into Christian civilization, we are convinced that not only was Christ's humiliation the divinest quality of His manifestation, but that it is in keeping with the most fundamental feature of human society, the Family. The family, of many members, is a perpetual object-lesson for man of what Christ reveals to us of God, Which inhabiteth eternity. In our families law and love—guidance and due punishment, but not drastic compulsion; the discipline of experience, and the force of persuasive example—these introduce us to the life on earth, and prepare us for the life to come. The best ordered household is the most amenable to laws. The head of the house is not obtrusive in the management; and although you would miss the master and mistress if they were not there, you often for-

get they are there, since the home seems to run itself. So with our Heavenly Father.

> "Behind the great unknown
> Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

Still speak, if you will, of the humiliation of the Incarnation—so tenaciously does the paradox of it cling to our Christian phraseology—but grasp with mind and heart and will that the manner of our Lord's birth and crucifixion is but the supreme instance of God's method in the universe as one whole; and that the surprise about it, which is expressed even in the Bible, is the creature's surprise, not the Creator's. "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; if it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it be also marvellous in Mine eyes? saith the Lord of Hosts." It is God's custom to order His conduct without the self-assertion, or rather without the self-display, which even in human beings is a sign of imperfection, not of superabundant power. We must outlive our barbarian mind. We must accept Christ's revelation of what God actually is: the I AM That I AM.

The fact is, God in Christ is educating us; and here the irony of St. Paul applies: "the weakness of God is stronger than men." As with human teachers and their pupils, we cannot gauge

God's ultimate purposes, though Christ has helped us to know some of them, and much of God's character. But if God is educating us as we educate our children, can we imagine a more efficient way? Perhaps, in this short, perplexing world, it is not so much a question—to employ the phrase a young man used to me—it is not so much a question whether God "gets there," as whether we do. And perhaps we are getting there.

"Thou art the Way.
Hadst Thou been nothing but the goal,
I cannot say
If Thou hadst ever met my soul."

Brothers, in this especially trying time some of us have allowed ourselves to be despondent, as if the Church and the religion of Jesus were being successfully treated with contempt. But it is an over-eager reading of the ways of Providence to conclude that the better, the ultimate cause must quickly win. So it is well for us to be brought at Christmastide to the cradle of the Christchild. The old master Garofalo pictures it so that even there and then the happy, adoring angels are presenting the Holy Child with the nails and scourge, symbols of the prolonged suffering that was to befall Him before the end. We must not quite forget, even in our Christmas joy, that iniquity was apparently triumphant in our Lord's life, and right was crucified. Nay, no sooner did He rise

again in glory, manifesting His power over the grave, so that it looked as if henceforth He would, as we are wont to say, "have His own way" in everything—no sooner did He rise from the dead than He began by restricting that marvellous manifestation to a very small number of persons. As St. Peter said in his address to the kinsmen and friends of Cornelius: "Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us." And thereafter our Lord pursued the same old perplexing method. For did He not commit His cause to the frail and faulty apprehension of Jew and Gentile, leaving it to be worked out by the little faith of such disciples? We are working it out now.

And, by a strange coincidence, it is in these dark days that the good news has come that the English have taken Jerusalem and Bethlehem for the Allied Cause; and this without firing a single gun at the holy places. May we not take this as a sign that the long-suffering Spirit of Jesus, humiliated as men think, is bound to live and grow among us in God's own way and time? God is in no hurry, for He has eternity to work in; and our times are in His Hand. This time there is room for Him in Bethlehem's inn.

# APPENDIX

THE DEAN'S OFFICE

CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE, NEW YORK

THE REV. GEORGE WILLIAM DOUGLAS, D.D.,
5 East 88th Street, New York City.

December 26, 1917.

MY DEAR DR. DOUGLAS:

Let me express again my appreciation of the service you have rendered to the Cathedral in preaching here the series of Advent sermons which was concluded last Sunday.

You have placed us all under a great obligation. You will put us still deeper in debt if you will accede to the wish which many have expressed that the sermons might be published. So many have found them stimulating and helpful that the publication of them would be a public benefit.

With warm regard, I am,

Faithfully yours,

(Signed) HOWARD C. ROBBINS.

TUCKAHOE, N. Y.,
Jan. 2, 1918.

DEAR DOCTOR DOUGLAS:

It is my pleasant duty to notify you that at the last meeting of The Clericus it was moved and unanimously carried that The Clericus should request you to publish your Advent Sermons at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. The members present desired to sign their names to this request, and some who were not present particularly desired to do the same. I am forwarding their signatures herewith.

I wish you God's blessing on a happy new year.

Very truly yours,
(Signed) FREDERICK A. WRIGHT,
Secretary of The Clericus.

HENRY TOWNSEND SCUDDER
ARTHUR L. BUMPUS
CHARLES F. CANEDY
RANDALL C. HALL
FLOYD S. LEACH
MELVILLE K. BAILEY
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